CLAIMS

1.   A computing environment comprising:

    a file server;

    a file system adapted to store software and data and that is adapted to be accessible to the file server; and

    a workstation adapted to couple to the file server and to a client computer;

    wherein the workstation is adapted to cause at least some software or data that is not permanently stored on the workstation to be transferred to the workstation from the file system via the file server when requested by the client computer.

2.   The computing environment of claim 1 wherein the file system comprises a centralized database.

3.   The computing environment of claim 1 wherein the file server comprises a database server.

4.   The computing environment of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of file servers that implement load balancing to distribute traffic among the file servers.

5.   The computing environment of claim 1 wherein the file server implements a heartbeat that determines whether the file server has failed.

6.   The computing environment of claim 1 wherein the file system implements a file protocol selected from the group consisting of Network File System ("NFS"), Andrew File System ("AFS"), and a combination of NFS and AFS.

7.   A computing environment comprising:

    a file server;

a file system that is adapted to store client applications and data and that is adapted to be accessible to the file server; and

a workstation adapted to couple to the file server and to a client computer, the workstation comprises a storage medium on which control files are permanently stored, but client applications are not permanently stored;

wherein the workstation is adapted to cause client applications and data to be transferred to the workstation from the file system via the file server when requested by the client computer.

8.   The computing environment of claim 7 wherein the data that is transferred to the workstation is used by a client application running on the workstation and wherein the data is permanently stored on the file system and not the workstation.

9.   The computing environment of claim 7 wherein control files comprise server configuration settings.

10.   The computing environment of claim 7 further comprising an interface through which the file server communicates to the workstation.

11.   The computing environment of claim 7 wherein the file system comprises a storage medium selected from the group consisting of Redundant Arrays of Inexpensive Disks ("RAID") and small computer system interface ("SCSI") drives.

12.   A method implemented on a system comprising a file server coupled to a workstation, a client computer and a file system, comprising:

receiving a request from a client computer for a client application, the client application being stored in non-volatile memory on the file system and not on the workstation;

transferring the requested client application from the file system to the workstation for execution on the workstation; and

executing the requested client application on the workstation.

13. The method of claim 12 further comprising receiving a request from the client computer for data to be used by the client application, the data being stored permanently in non-volatile memory on the file system and not in non-volatile memory on the workstation.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising transferring the requested data from the file system to the workstation.

15. A system, comprising:
   a file server;
   means for storing client applications and data; and
   means for retrieving the client applications and data from the means for storing the client applications and data and for executing the client applications as required by a client computer.

16. The system of claim 15 wherein the means for retrieving further comprises means for retrieving the client applications and data from the means for storing each time a client computer requires execution of the client applications.

17. A workstation, comprising:
   a CPU; and
   a volatile memory coupled to the CPU;
   wherein said CPU requests a client application and data from an external file system on behalf of a client and executes the client application on behalf of the client.

18.   The workstation of claim 17 wherein the workstation requests a client application and data from the external file system every time a client requests the client application to be executed.